

Approved as amended on 10/24/2005 – See 10/24/05 minutes.

Members of the Budget Committee met at the Town Hall on Monday August 8, 2005 and reviewed mail and other budget items.

Pinkham said she would make an effort to contact Joe Delahunty in advance of meetings as his work schedule often precludes him from getting mail, etc in a timely manner, as reminder of meetings.

The meeting came to order at at 7:15 pm in the Fremont Town Hall. Present were members Charles Kimball, Peg Pinkham, Marc Wood, Don Gates, Mike Miller, and Audrey Karamourtopoulos; and Town Administrator Heidi Carlson.

Members had been reviewing a letter dropped off today (undated) from Representative Bob Dodge regarding the special school district meeting held in January 2004 and the long-term tuition contract with Sanborn Regional School District.

Members reviewed the Town budgeted expense report through June 2005; and through the end of July 2005. The expense report and revenue report (with percentages) through July 2005.

There was discussion about the Fire Department not having purchased their proposed new equipment and uniforms yet. It was the Budget Committee's recommendation that the departments purchase their new equipment when the funds are approved such that they can fully utilize the newest equipment.

There was some discussion about the Fire and Rescue Study Committee which was formed based on the Budget Committee's recommendations and questions generated from the last budget season. The Selectmen have gotten an information gathering committee together to look at the different aspects of rescue and fire issues; and they are meeting this summer.

There was discussion about Highway summer maintenance and what that covers. It was explained that it is all equipment rental and usage for all non-winter items (brush, cold patches, signs, ditching, etc).

Questions were asked about Beede Hill Road and what was State versus Town maintained. Miller asked how that agreement was made and why. No one present could answer, so DOT will be contacted.

Questions were raised about the enrollment for the summer program, and the Director will be contacted to get those numbers.

There was discussion about dugouts and location at the last field in the back. Karamourtopoulos offered that Wayne Copp said he would build a dugout and retaining wall (on behalf of the FAA) and she indicated that it was denied as assistance from the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Some general budget and revenue discussion ensued with questions answered by Gates and Carlson.

Pinkham said that the end of year school report was delivered to her at 6:00 pm this evening. She distributed copies and told members to review it and mark it up with any questions, asking people to get her an email and ask specific questions so that she can get the answers to any questions and further information as needed.

Karamourtopoulos mentioned getting a letter about hiring a second principal, and questioned if that was in the budget. Pinkham explained that they had a Curriculum Director who resigned in June of this year. The School Board also let someone go in late May or early June (parent liaison) they looked at the total package of who was doing what, strengths of the PBIS program, and how the situation could be resolved, in terms of reporting as well.

Pinkham said that they wanted to streamline the procedure as had been discussed by the Budget Committee last budget cycle. Dawn Lewis was looking for another position, but it was a good time to look at the skill level, the work that needed to be done, who was doing certain tasks, etc.

There are two principals, directly involved in PBIS (Positive Behavior Reinforcement Program) and curriculum development, and they have hired another Special Education Director. Dawn Lewis is the principal for the elementary aged children and Kelli Killen of the middle school children.

Pinkham said that this repositioning resulted in a savings of approximately \$55,000. The School Board believes that eliminating and realigning positions, for support staff, will create a more comprehensive environment. There was discussion about job duties, this realignment, and the different roles and responsibilities involved.

Some Budget Committee members felt that it would have been helpful to hear the vision and see the roadmap of what the School Board had in mind in this regard. Miller said that this issue generated considerable discussion at the Budget Committee last year, with a difference of opinion about the symantics for these positions and the job titles and duties.

Wood suggested that the road map and vision would be helpful for the Budget Committee to see what lies ahead, and where these issues have come from and perhaps are going. Pinkham said that there is also a specialist who comes in for counseling that has gone from two days per week to full-time.

Pinkham said they are evaluating the situation, jobs, and current personnel to see how they are working.

Kimball asked if the Selectmen had decided on a percentage of increase for the upcoming budget year, and Gates said the Board had not decided, and would certainly look for information as a guideline from the Budget Committee.

Members asked about the current budget year and how that has affected daily operations, in that many lines were held level or cut from a prior year. Carlson indicated that things were going well so far, and that there were just not the extra projects being done.

There was also discussion about the tax rate and when it would be set. The revaluation hearings are currently ongoing, and the Town will have the database back in about two weeks to make any final changes before sending the information to Concord for the tax rate setting. It is hoped this will not be too far beyond the normal September 1st timing.

The School is expecting a reduction in revenue from the State of NH, the Town does not forecast any decrease in the amount of state revenues for 2005.

There was discussion about sales tax and what effect that might have on local property taxes.

Gates explained his thoughts on the Dodge letter. Members were all given a copy to review. Miller said that he agreed that this is an issue, would like to put it to bed by knowing the status once and for all.

Pinkham said the School Board has a letter from the NH Department of Education indicating that they have a valid contract with Sanborn Regional. They also have the opinion of their counsel; and Pinkham reiterated that the NH DOE had an attorney review the matter prior to their determination.

Miller asked for those letters to be shared with the budget committee, and Pinkham said she would look into getting those for the Committee.

Gates stated his opinion that the statute needs to be cleaned up, and that the legislature needs to do it, or it will ultimately be settled at the Supreme Court.

Miller expressed his thoughts on the distinctions within the two statutes and feels that the initial vote was not taken in accord with the law. Pinkham offered that the School Board feels that they have a valid contract. She said the School Board has discussed this and decided not to revote it, as that would bring some doubt to the validity of the existing contract and vote.

Miller made the motion that the Budget Committee go back to Dodge and the other representatives and Senator, and ask them to go back to the NH Commissioner of Education and the Attorney General Office to get their opinion on this matter to finalize it.

There was discussion about whether this letter from Representative Dodge (which is undated) is the most current and what response there has been from the DOE or the NH Attorney General.

There was lengthy discussion about this issue. The final vote was as follows:

YES – Miller, Karamourtopoulos, Wood, Kimball

NO – Gates, Pinkham

The final decision of the Committee was to direct Carlson to send a letter to Bob Dodge, Dan Itse, Ron Nowe and Jack Barnes, and ask them to pursue this matter as raised in the letter dropped off today at the Town Hall; and have the Representatives and Senator report back on their findings and the decision of the NH DOE and NH AG. The Committee added that they

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE

08 August 2005

needed to have this information back by mid-September so that it can be reviewed at the next Budget Committee meeting.

Pinkham said that there is a study committee being formed to look at the validity of a stand-alone SAU. She indicated that the Budget Committee needed to decide on a representative from the group. Currently the study committee consists of Peg Pinkham, Brande McLean, Lisa Begley, and it needs a representative from the Budget Committee.

Miller moved to appoint Marc Wood as the Budget committee Representative to the SAU Withdrawal Study Committee. Gates seconded and the vote was all in favor with Wood abstaining.

The next meeting was set for Monday October 3, 2005 at 7:00 pm. The Committee would like to see first quarter school and third quarter town reports at that time.

With no further business to come before the Committee, motion was made by Wood and seconded by Pinkham to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm. The vote was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator